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REMARKS

Claims 1-34 are pending in the application. By the Office Action set forth above, claims 1-7, 14, and 17-18 are rejected and claims 8, 15, 19-21, and 23-25 are objected to. Claims 9-13, 16, 22, and 26-34 have been previously withdrawn. By this Amendment, claims 1-4 and 21 are amended. These claim amendments, along with the following remarks, are fully responsive to the Office Action set forth above. After entry of this Amendment, claims 1-8, 14-15, 17-21, and 23-25 are in condition for allowance. A notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-7, 14, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Zavilenski et al. (U.S. Patent 6,371,760). The Office Action states that the Zavilenski reference teaches a process that includes: (1) positioning a first component having an edge, a major surface and a top surface spaced apart from the major surface by the edge with respect to a second component such that the surface is in overlapping contact with the major surface of the first component, and (2) forming an edge weld that extends beyond the edge and onto the top surface of the first component and the surface of the second component.

The Office Action characterizes an intersection between two surfaces in the Zavilenski reference as being an edge, which is considerably different from the meaning of “edge” in the current invention. The current invention is directed to a method that includes positioning a first component having an edge that spaces apart two surfaces. One of the surfaces is adjacent a surface on a second component. Such an edge is not an intersection of two surfaces, but is effectively a narrow surface itself located between at least a portion of the two surfaces. By forming a weld that extends beyond the edge and onto the “top surface” or the other of the two surfaces of the first component, the current invention provides important advantages.

One such advantage is reduction or elimination of component separation and a resultant vibration or “flapping” that can occur when suspension components are subjected to air currents created by fast moving disk drives. When a weld is used near the center of the contact area between components, a gap may form between the surfaces of the attached

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components. The air currents that result from the moving disk drives can be forced into the gaps, causing the vibration or flapping. Forming edge welds of the type recited reduces or eliminates the gap between components, thereby reducing or eliminating the unwanted flapping.

To more particularly point out and distinctly claim the differences between the Zavilenski reference and the current invention, claim 1 has been amended to recite an "edge surface." As amended, the method of claim 1 recites the step of positioning a component having an edge surface, a first major surface, and a second major surface that opposes the first major surface and is spaced apart from the first major surface by the edge surface with respect to a second component. A surface of the second component is in overlapping contact with the first major surface of the first component. Claim 1 also recites the step of forming an edge weld at the edge, such that the edge weld extends beyond the edge into the second major surface of the first component and the surface of the second component. Thus, the edge weld is formed to extend into the second major surface, which opposes the first major surface.

By contrast, the Zavilenski reference neither teaches nor suggests the step of forming an edge weld that extends beyond the edge surface and into the second major surface of the first component, the second major surface opposing the first major surface, which is in contact with the surface of the second component. Instead, the Zavilenski reference teaches a weld that does not extend into any surface on the first component that opposes the first major surface. For at least this reason, the Applicant submits that amended claims 1-7, 14, and 18 are not anticipated by the Zavilenski reference. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claims 1-7 and 18 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Fields, Jr. (U.S. Patent 6,261,701). The Office Action asserts that the Fields, Jr. reference teaches positioning a first component having an edge, a major surface, and a top surface, spaced apart from the major surface by the edge with respect to a second surface, such that the surface of the second component is in overlapping contact with the major surface of the first component, and forming an edge weld that extends beyond the edge and onto the top surface of the first component and the surface of the second component.

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Applicant respectfully disagrees. The Fields, Jr. reference neither teaches nor suggests positioning the first component so that its major surface is in overlapping contact with the surface of the second component. Figs. 1 and 2 of the Fields, Jr. reference show two components positioned relative to each other so that surfaces 25 and 35 (expressly referred to as edges in the Fields, Jr. reference) of each component are butted up against each other. Applicant disagrees that either surface 25 and 35 are major surfaces. As shown in FIG. 1 and described in the Fields, Jr. reference, surfaces 25 and 35 are edges of sheet metal blanks 20 and 30. The Fields, Jr. reference, therefore, does not disclose the claimed invention because it does not teach or suggest positioning a second component that is positioned to be in overlapping contact with a major surface of the first component. Rather, the components are positioned so that only the relatively minor surfaces, or edges, of each of the two components are in contact with each other.

To more particularly point out and distinctly claim these differences, claim 1 has been amended to recite a "second major surface that opposes the first major surface." As amended, the method of claim 1 recites the step of positioning a component having an edge surface, a first major surface, and a second major surface that opposes the first major surface and is spaced apart from the first major surface by the edge surface with respect to a second component. A surface of the second component is in overlapping contact with the first major surface of the first component. Claim 1 also recites the step of forming an edge weld at the edge, such that the edge weld extends beyond the edge into the second major surface of the first component and the surface of the second component. Thus, the edge weld is formed to extend into the second major surface, which opposes the first major surface.

By contrast, the Fields, Jr. reference, as described above, discloses aligning two components along their respective edge surfaces and forming a butt weld to connect the two components along their respective edge surfaces. Thus, the Applicants submit that the Fields, Jr. reference does not teach positioning the first and second components as recited in claim 1. In addition, no weld in the Fields, Jr. reference extends over an edge surface and into a second major surface that opposes the first major surface, which in turn is positioned in contact with the second component. Thus, the Fields, Jr. reference does not teach or suggest the step of forming the edge weld recited in claim 1. For at least these reasons, the

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Applicant respectfully submits that amended claims 1-7, and 18 are not anticipated by the Fields, Jr. reference. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claim 17

Claim 17 is listed as rejected in the Office Action Summary, but no rejection is specifically stated in the Office Action. The Applicant submits that claim 17 depends from claim 1, which, as been asserted above, is allowable over the rejections asserted against it. Applicant therefore respectfully submits that claim 17 is allowable over the references of record. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Applicant acknowledges and appreciates the Office Action's determination that claims 8, 15, 19-21, and 23-25 include allowable subject matter. The Applicant respectfully submits that, in light of the amendments and remarks offered above, these claims are allowable as written. Withdrawal of the objection is requested.

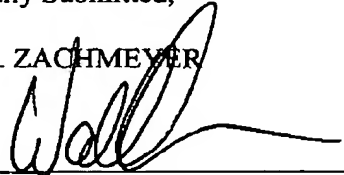
Conclusion

All pending claims not previously withdrawn are now in condition for allowance. A notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

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